

SOUTH AFRICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF
EDUCATION: MEDAL OF HONOR 1977*

TRIBUTE TO PROF. DR. C. K. OBERHOLZER

delivered in February 1977 during a gathering of the S. A. A. E. at
the University of the Orange Free State, Bloemfontein

When one thinks of Carel Krugel Oberholzer “as a great academician who thoroughly knows and commands his subject; as a tireless worker who year in and year out devotes himself to his work with undivided attention and diligence; as a teacher for whom nothing is of too much trouble when he has to act as a teacher of philosophy and education ...; as a leader and adviser; as a good friend, humble person, devoted believer and church person”⁽¹⁾ this can be done adequately only in terms of thankfulness:

First: the thankfulness of colleagues who by his influence have been lead away from the blind allies of naturalism, evolutionism, behaviorism, humanism and existentialism;

Second: the thankfulness (although mostly unconscious and unexpressed) of those who have concentrated on providing commentary on Oberholzer’s views and in this way have tried to justify their academic existence;⁽²⁾

Third: the thankfulness of numerous students who have had and still have the privilege of sitting at the feet of the greatest authority and exponent in South Africa of phenomenology, philosophical anthropology, child anthropology and phenomenological axiology. It is then also from his existential-phenomenological thinking that he has exercised and still exercises influence as an eminent scientist and professor.⁽³⁾

Forth: the thankfulness of hundreds of teacher-educators who by his analyses of the essentials of a view of life inculcated in them that educating is meaningful because in its deepest essence it is philosophy of life actualizing. In scientifically accountable ways Oberholzer showed that educating never can or might be neutral;

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Fifth: the thankfulness of colleagues that evidences an appreciation for Oberholzer.

- (a) M. J. Langeveld⁽⁴⁾ (Utrecht) has an appreciation for Oberholzer:
 - (i) because he participates in the same line of thinking as Langeveld. The fact that he calls Oberholzer's point of view a "Christian phenomenology" indicates that Oberholzer (where this is relevant) does not hesitate to reveal that he holds a Christian philosophy of life.
 - (ii) because he takes a position against the idea of Pedagogics as an applied science.
 - (iii) for his recognition of categories and criteria as important matters. However, this matter must be considered further phenomenologically — something that indeed was (and still is being) done by Oberholzer's students; and
 - (iv) for his contributions to thinking the pedagogic through to its fundamentals.

- (b) S. J. Schoeman⁽⁵⁾ (Port Elizabeth) has an appreciation for Oberholzer's:
 - (i) contribution to the pedagogic and to Pedagogics that is characterized by depth and clarity;
 - (ii) use of disciplined and accountable technical language by which trivialities are overcome;
 - (iii) attention to methodology, particularly phenomenology which is not recipe-like for him;
 - (iv) accountable comparing and testing of standpoints; and
 - (v) emphasis of the fact that science primarily does not have to do with findings but with a search for the scientifically honest.

- (c) J. Chr. Coetzee⁽⁶⁾ (Potchefstroom) has an appreciation for Oberholzer:
 - (i) for his power of penetration in viewing the educative reality;
 - (ii) as a student of the phenomenon of educating;
 - (iii) for his appeal for open discussion;

- (iv) because with the adjective “Fundamental” he indicates that this discipline of Education is the most important;
 - (v) for his emphasis on the significance of ideological (philosophies of life and world views) moments in meaningful educating;
 - (vi) for his phenomenological approach in so far as it is a method of pure perceiving and thinking. However, there must be a move to more than a phenomenological anthropology, namely, to a Christian anthropology (Coetzee);
 - (vii) for his independence, originality, erudition and sympathy as a thinker and writer.
- (d) C. F. G. Gunter⁽⁷⁾ (Stellenbosch) agrees with Oberholzer:
- (i) that phenomenological structural analysis is of a formal nature and thus poor in content;
 - (ii) that the child has an existential need for an adult;
 - (iii) that pedagogic criteria must be designed;
 - (iv) that a child seeks security.
- (e) W. A. Landman⁽⁸⁾ (Pretoria) has particular appreciation for Oberholzer’s:
- (i) fundamental influence on Pedagogics because of existential thinking and the rejection of existentialism;
 - (ii) implementing phenomenology which makes the ontological understanding of the pedagogic possible and precisely because this understanding is meaningful;
 - (iii) grounding the pedagogic, including designing its categories, in ontological-anthropological being;
 - (iv) emphasizing the autonomy of Pedagogics;
 - (v) emphasizing the normative-ethical and the norm-centeredness of the pedagogic;
 - (vi) giving post-scientific, Christian-Protestant content to the pedagogic.
 - (vii) The South African Association for the Advancement of Education’s appreciation for

Oberholzer is evident in the awarding of this medal of honor.

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